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—
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Mr. Bob Mills

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

I'd like to welcome our guests and thank you for returning. Let's hope that we won't have any fire or water problems, or any other problems that would cause the cancellation of our meeting.

I understand, Mr. Haché, that you have 90 minutes. Is that correct?

Hon. Roland Haché (Minister of Environment and Minister responsible for the Northern New Brunswick Initiative, Government of New Brunswick): I would correct that and say 30 minutes.

The Chair: Okay. Certainly I'll ask members to be aware of that, and we will get on with this as quickly as we can. Again, thank you so much for returning.

Thank you, Ambassador Iremark, as well, for being here again and understanding the problem we had last time.

Go ahead, Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Thank you, Chair. I have a procedural item before we hear from the witnesses.

We have tentatively scheduled to hear from the minister on May 28. There's a lot of work by the department to prepare for the main estimates, so just to make sure that we are meeting on May 28, could we make a quick motion that we actually confirm that date of May 28 for the minister?

The Chair: Everyone has heard the motion. I think May 28 was agreed to earlier. Is everybody in favour of that?

Go ahead, Mr. Regan.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Was it agreed to earlier?

The Chair: Yes, we had agreed to do the estimates. They have to be done by May—

Hon. Geoff Regan: We agreed to do the estimates, yes.

The Chair: Yes, and to the minister appearing with the—

Hon. Geoff Regan: We agreed on the day. That should be clear; okay.

The Chair: Yes, that has been part of our schedule for some time.

Hon. Geoff Regan: So May 28 is what we're talking about.

The Chair: Yes; it's Wednesday, May 28, when we get back.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Could we begin?

Mr. Martin, I believe you have a brief statement. I think we have circulated that, have we? Yes, everyone has it, so if you could just briefly summarize, we will then move on to the ambassador from Sweden, then to Mr. Haché, and then right to questions.

Go ahead, Mr. Martin.

Mr. Michael Martin (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy Branch, Department of the Environment): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Translation]

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I am pleased to be here before you today to assist the committee in its consideration of Bill C-474.

I would like to begin by spending a moment on the Government of Canada's current approach to sustainable development strategies. As you know, government departments have been required to produce sustainable development strategies every three years since 1997, in compliance with the 1995 amendments to the Auditor General Act.

The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, who is responsible for reviewing these strategies under the act, has been consistently critical of the effectiveness of the strategies as drivers of change.

In December 2006, on tabling the fourth round of sustainable development strategies, the Minister of the Environment specifically noted the commissioner's observation in 2005 that the failure to develop a federal sustainable development strategy “will leave Canadians and parliamentarians...”

• (1535)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Martin, excuse me for one minute. Because we thought we had 90 minutes with Mr. Haché and we now have 30 minutes, the clerk and I just discussed that possibly we should go immediately to Mr. Haché's statement and then to any questions that arise out of his statement so that we can accommodate the 30 minutes that we have with him.

Could we do that? I know it's not the normal procedure, but...

Mr. Haché, could you just give us a brief statement? Then we'll get the questions in, and you can be on your way.

Hon. Roland Haché: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I have prepared something here in writing, which I will convey to you.

I also want to say good afternoon to the committee members.

[*Translation*]

I want to thank the committee for inviting me to speak about New Brunswick's efforts to ensure sustainable development, in the context of the committee's deliberations on Bill C-474, An Act to require the development and implementation of a National Sustainable Development Strategy.

[*English*]

At this time, Mr. Chair, I would like to introduce you to two of the personnel who work with us in the Department of Environment. The first is Kim Hughes, the director of sustainable planning. Also, we have Liane Macfarlane, who's the director of policy and strategic planning. When it comes to questions later, they will be happy to answer any technical questions the committee may have.

[*Translation*]

The province of New Brunswick is entering into a period of change that will make itself sufficient and that will promote sustainable development.

Our deliberations regarding this approach for building sustainable communities is an important element of our self-sufficiency program in New Brunswick, as developed in our action plan. A copy of this action plan, along with all other pertinent documents, will be available to the committee members.

I hope that this brief presentation will clarify for you our approach to sustainable development.

Let us now go to slide number 2.

[*English*]

Sustainable development is about the sustainability challenge. Basically, we humans are using up our resources—our natural capital—faster than they are available, and we are exceeding the carrying capacity of the earth's ecosystem. As part of this challenge we need to focus on solving the gap, the ecological overshoot, between the earth's carrying capacity and our consumption habits.

One of the symptoms of exceeding our carrying capacity is a changing climate. As a result of climate change, New Brunswick's coastal communities are and will be affected by sea level rise, erosion, and salt water intrusion. Communities such as Le Goulet, in northern New Brunswick, and Pointe-du-Chêne, in the south of New Brunswick, are directly threatened by the impact of sea level rise. Inland water resources, both their quality and quantity, are also impacted. Flooding events in the Saint John River Valley are now affecting communities and people in a large area of the province. Prime Minister Harper recently visited this area to observe the flood damage in person.

People today are more aware of issues such as climate change, the links between pollution and health, the energy crunch, water

shortages, and floods. This awareness is the basis upon which we can build change. In New Brunswick we are using this to advance the concept of sustainable communities, the foundation of which is sustainable development. It means changing the way we do things. There are incredible opportunities for innovation.

[*Translation*]

In New Brunswick, we believe that sustainable development means the integration of economic, environmental and social factors into decision-making. Environmental, economic and social issues cannot be dealt with as if they were independent and parallel entities. A balance of these three factors, for current and future needs, will translate into economic growth, social progress and environmental stewardship, and this is often considered as a triple result of our decisions regarding sustainable development.

This balance can also be seen as resulting from a coordination of the decisions regarding financial capital, human capital and business practices.

Let us now go on to slide number 4.

● (1540)

[*English*]

New Brunswick's approach to sustainable development is based on this integration of environmental, economic, and social goals. It is also about a process to engage citizens and empower decision-makers. We understand that to be successful, any activities and actions toward sustainability must be undertaken with partners who plan their future together in a sustainable manner. It is about guiding the right development to the appropriate location. Ultimately, it's about building livable communities and sustainable communities that plan for the future at the local, regional, and provincial levels.

[*Translation*]

I would like to give you a few examples of our way of implementing sustainable development methods and building sustainable communities.

First, we created a structure and a mandate to support the planning of sustainable development in New Brunswick. The Department of the Environment is in charge of environmental legislation and legislation on community development. We created the Sustainable Planning Branch, which is in charge of coordinating planning, land use, the use of water and air, resources as well as the monitoring of a network of planning district boards which are responsible for providing development services at the local level and for giving support to municipalities.

Secondly, we are changing our relations and partnerships in order to promote sustainable development. The sustainable community initiative and the more recent study of sustainable communities in the greater Saint John region are innovative approaches that we adopted to promote the concept of sustainable development.

Third, we are developing tools to build sustainable communities based on a specific initiative of durable community design, which applies conservation design principles to the development of land lots. Moreover, we are carrying on with the development of our program for contaminated sites.

Now let us go on to slide number 6, please.

[English]

In November 2007, the greater Saint John sustainable communities case study was launched. The objective was to gain an understanding of how to build sustainable communities. It included 35 opinion leaders from the five communities of the greater Saint John region and senior-level participation from five provincial government departments. It also explored transforming relationships and how we deal with communities at large and government departments. Copies of the final report on this initiative can be found online at our department website.

So what have we learned? Well, a number of actions were identified as outcomes in the areas of leadership, strategic approaches, meaningful public engagement, and the creation of sustainable community plans.

The case study is strongly linked to our government's self-sufficiency objectives. With this case study, we are creating the building blocks necessary to implement a strategic approach to regional planning. It will assist us in working to develop the mosaic of sustainable communities throughout a self-sufficient New Brunswick.

Slide 7, please.

• (1545)

[Translation]

The design of sustainable communities for urban development is an avant-garde approach in urban development that tries to mitigate the negative human impact on the environment and to enable the community to function by using another planning design. This approach allows the developer to cut down on infrastructure costs and to increase residential density, while still protecting the environment. It gives residents various choices of residence with access to nearby natural spaces as well as to opportunities to reduce their impact on their environment. For example, one of the projects brought together many partners, including a private promoter, the Town of Dieppe, the School of Planning of Dalhousie University, several provincial departments, the University of Moncton, the New Brunswick Community College, as well as a local elementary school.

The project was developed based on sustainability principles so as to build liveable communities. I am glad to state that the sustainable community design initiative in New Brunswick is arousing interest all over Canada. We contacted promoters, not only in our province but also in other regions of Canada, for example, in the cities of Calgary, Alberta, and of Trois-Rivières and Sutton, Quebec.

Let us now continue with slide number 8, please.

[English]

New Brunswick employs an innovative and proven approach to contaminated site management. The Atlantic risk-based corrective action approach has been developed by many partners, including business interests and Atlantic government regulators.

I am pleased to inform you today that the Atlantic risk-based corrective action approach has been used in New Brunswick to

remediate and improve more than 1,450 contaminated sites since 1999. This technical tool can be used to facilitate the redevelopment of brownfield lands previously abandoned and unsuitable for development in our communities.

Slide 9, please.

[Translation]

This is an example of the redevelopment of contaminated sites in Moncton. It would be interesting to look at the photographs taken before and after decontamination. You will see that there was considerable change.

The Government of New Brunswick and the people in the Moncton region are very glad that the site that used to serve for repairing trains, which is called a brown field, has become a very liveable place.

Slide number 10, please.

[English]

In moving to develop a comprehensive provincial brownfield redevelopment plan, we are interested in pursuing a dialogue with the federal government on ways to promote brownfield redevelopment—for example, incentive programs, harmonizing our regulations, and broader adoption of the other CCME brownfield recommendations. These are only three examples of actions we're undertaking to achieve sustainable development.

Slide 11, please.

[Translation]

New Brunswick has created an organization and proposed suggestions to promote sustainable development through the concept of sustainable communities.

However, sustainable development will not be brought about overnight. We are currently modifying our practices in view of our objectives, which means that we are attracting and promoting methods of sustainable development and we are becoming recognized as leaders in this field.

The Department of the Environment and our government both appreciate the values of commitment and innovation displayed by every stakeholder in our effort to standardize decision-making in view of sustainable development. We are on the way to integrating our social, economic and environmental decisions and we are constantly making progress.

We want to make sure that our way of implementing sustainable development is fair, efficient and effective for all the communities in New Brunswick. We also want to build sustainable communities in a self-sufficient province.

Let us go on to slide number 12, please.

[English]

I trust that you've found what we're doing in New Brunswick valuable for your deliberations. I would like to thank the committee chair for inviting me to share with you today our vision for sustainable development and our experiences. I welcome the opportunity to answer some of your questions or to consult with my department staff for further information on the initiatives we are pursuing.

Thank you.

• (1550)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Haché.

We have two other witnesses. As we have discussed, we will go to a quick round so that we can ask one question per party rather quickly. I won't be timing, but I'll ask you to be very brief, and then Mr. Haché can be on his way. Then, right when we finish, we'll go to our other witnesses and have a full discussion and questions with them.

We will begin with Mr. Regan.

[Translation]

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, Mr. Minister Haché, I would like to thank you for coming, at least in your virtual presence.

I presume that you have read Bill C-474. How does it impact on your current activities?

Hon. Roland Haché: It is important for New Brunswick that federal legislation match provincial legislation and vice versa. I suppose that the same applies to the other provinces but I do not want to speak on their behalf.

One of the obstacles which we encounter when the time comes to legislate is our obligation to get the federal government's consent. I imagine that the federal government must agree with the provincial legislation.

Today's conference should help us reach this goal or at least to come closer to it. We must absolutely continue our discussions to make sure that we are doing exactly the same things.

The provincial and federal objectives are the same, the way of attaining them often raises problems. The conflicts arise from what was left unsaid, and not from what was said.

New Brunswick is really ready to discuss matters with the federal government to help it to implement the best possible legislation for the environment.

[English]

The Chair: Briefly, Mr. Regan, please.

[Translation]

Hon. Geoff Regan: Could you tell us about the kind of cooperation that currently exists with the other provinces, for instance through the Canada Council of Ministers of the Environment? What kind of leadership would you like to see in the federal government?

Hon. Roland Haché: I am sorry, I did not understand the first part of your question.

Hon. Geoff Regan: What kind of cooperation is there at this time with the other provinces, for instance through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment?

Hon. Roland Haché: I have only held the position of Minister of the Environment of New Brunswick since October 2006. Ministers come and go rather quickly, both at the provincial and federal levels. As I have just indicated, the most important thing for us to do is to pursue our dialogue.

I had the opportunity to meet with my provincial counterparts as well as Mr. Baird, the federal Minister of the Environment. We can be confident that things will change because the provincial and federal governments are really intent on meeting common objectives. Setting objectives is rather easy. Everyone agrees on the objectives that we should meet. The hard part is finding how we will achieve them.

Of course, each province has its reasons to want one thing rather than another. For example, it is much easier to produce electricity pollution-free in Quebec than it is in New Brunswick, which is extremely dependent on coal. It is important that we pursue our dialogue through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. More important still, members have to keep on meeting to ensure a healthy environment and the high quality of our air and water.

We must continue our discussions and keep on setting common objectives, but we also have to talk about the objectives on which there is less consensus.

• (1555)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Bigras, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First off, on behalf of the members of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to say that we stand with you in solidarity during the trying times you are experiencing. We know that your communities were greatly affected by disasters, and I wanted to say that we stand behind you, as we have in the past and will continue to do in the future.

Minister, you or your officials have probably read Bill C-474, which sets out 10 worthy and desirable objectives, which, at the same time, are more than simple objectives. You said that the problem wasn't setting objectives, but rather finding ways to achieve them. You repeatedly spoke of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment as a forum for discussion, cooperation and partnerships.

Am I to understand that you prefer a forum such as the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment to a piece of federal legislation that sets out not only the objectives, but also their various components?

Hon. Roland Haché: I would first like to thank you, Mr. Bigras, for your question.

As you wholeheartedly supported the people of New Brunswick during the recent flooding there, so did New Brunswickers when you lived through the ice storm. We all remember the famous images of the house that was isolated and suspended in mid-river. I recall that very well. I think that both of our provinces support one another very much.

You've asked me whether I prefer federal legislation to discussions between ministers at the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. I think we cannot have one without the other, and that's how things should be. It is essential that the federal government, together with the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, be there at the table with all stakeholders. You said that you were a member of the Bloc, and I have absolutely no problem with that.

Allow me to share with you what I really think, and you might agree with me, Mr. Bigras. And others might as well. Given that the environment is such a crucial issue today, I believe that we must raise the debate above partisanship in order to really confront the problem. Regardless of their partisan leanings, all elected representatives who value the environment share our objective, i.e., to make the world a better place for our children and our grandchildren, and, if I may, for ourselves, and to do so today. In my view, this is a rather urgent problem.

I am not exactly a defeatist and I am not saying that we can't do anything anymore, that we should abandon our efforts and give up. On the contrary, we cannot give up. I do not agree with those who say it is too late to do anything. That isn't true. It isn't too late to do something. On the contrary, it is time to act. I'd say that it is high time to move forward. That is the purpose of our discussion here today.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Haché, could you keep your answers quite brief? We are running into a bit of a problem with time.

Mr. Bigras, one brief question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I wholeheartedly agree with you, Minister: there needs to be good federal-provincial cooperation. However, my question is more specific and addresses the substance of the bill. Would you be willing to support targets on such issues as urban land use? Would you accept federally-legislated targets for farmlands? That is the question. Wouldn't it be better to have a global strategy, with common objectives? Once the common objectives have been set, provinces can then agree on how to achieve them. That was the gist of my first question.

• (1600)

Hon. Roland Haché: Thank you, Mr. Bigras.

Mr. Chair, I will try to be brief.

I think we have to make sure that the federal government and the provinces cooperate. It is basically through such discussions that we will make progress. Mr. Bigras, we should never lose sight of the environment. That truly is the key issue. As for how we will achieve our ends, I think that is up for discussion. I'm sure that, as Jesse Owens said:

[*English*]

If we can walk long enough and talk long enough, I'm sure we'll find a solution.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cullen.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome, Minister.

I will ask my questions in English.

[*English*]

To realize this policy in effect rather than in theory, the current government and parties in Parliament have struggled with and considered the issue of biofuels as an example of sustainable development. Is this a good and proper measure for the targets and achievements we want?

With the concepts you've given us today, how is it that you consider policies under a sustainable development lens in New Brunswick? Could you use a specific example, whether it's biofuel consideration or something else, and place it in practice for me so I can understand how you lay the lens of economy, society, and environment on top of a decision? In this case I'm using the example of biofuels, but you can choose another one that might be more pertinent to your situation.

Hon. Roland Haché: Certainly that is a very interesting question. As I mentioned in my speech, it's quite a balancing act between economic development, social development, and environmental departments. We must try to strike the balance among the three. We have different groups that are not necessarily in accordance with other groups concerning, let's say, social development, environmental development, or economic development.

But as an example of what we've done in New Brunswick, as you've seen, in Penobsquis we've made sure that we provide water for people who do not have any water at this time, because there was a problem with the mine, etc.

I'm not sure exactly what your question was, but what I can tell you is that to me there cannot be any sustainable economic development if you don't have the other two, if you don't have social development and environmental development. And you can't have environmental development if you don't have social development and economic development. This is the perfect trio, I would say.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Minister, I appreciate that and I've read the document. In theory, what you say is true, but in practice we do it all the time in government: we put policies into place that are not balanced, that don't balance the three initiatives.

While I understand the intention of what you're saying and appreciate that New Brunswick has done a great deal of thinking and work in this area, I'm trying to have a specific policy application, for which I'm using the example of biofuels because it is in debate right now in Parliament, wherein an environmental and economic question has been put to policy makers: what type of biofuels, what to subsidize, what not to subsidize. It's a relevant topic for us as policy makers to understand and try to put into practice—not in theory. If you don't have a comment specifically on biofuels, that's fine, but if you have something else that demonstrates where you had to make choices....

Saying that we need to balance all three, we've said lots; every government does. But when push comes to shove, as you know when those different pulls are happening, what filter have you applied to put into effect the thing you've talked about in theory here?

• (1605)

Hon. Roland Haché: Let me give you an example, about the water situation in the Moncton region. I suppose you know about the Moncton region. It was done city by city: Riverview, Moncton, Dieppe. What we've done is take the parties and join them together. They work very well together; they work in collaboration. Now the water is on a regional basis.

So it's possible to have economic development in certain fields or in certain areas, because they've come together and worked together.

I don't know whether that's the example you're looking for, but certainly in New Brunswick that is a great thing that we've done, and we're very happy about it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Harvey.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC): I would first like to thank you, sir, for being here with us today.

Last week, I was in Africa and I saw pictures from New Brunswick of all the damage that you sustained. On behalf of my government, I would like to express all our support, and our thoughts go out to you.

I take it you read Bill C-474. It addresses a number of national and constitutional issues. My colleague Mr. Bigras asked you a few jurisdictional questions. Have you identified any elements in this bill that could cause problems for New Brunswick?

Hon. Roland Haché: I am not sure whether we have been lucky or not—I haven't been in politics for all that long—but we, in New Brunswick, are working rather well with the federal government and the Minister of the Environment. We haven't really identified any problems with the substance of your bill. For the time being, things are going well. There might be a few little things that we would like to negotiate, but nothing of great importance that is worth mentioning.

Mr. Luc Harvey: So you are satisfied with the bill's proposed regulations. It does deal with the management of municipal waste, which really falls under provincial jurisdiction. We are trying to quantify things and see how to proceed while respecting provincial

areas of jurisdiction. Are there any elements that need to be raised? That is important for us today.

Hon. Roland Haché: I must say that New Brunswick is quite advanced in terms of waste management. I will give you an example. Compared to all other provinces in Canada, New Brunswick produces the largest amount of compost. For us, this bill does not contain any major problem. I can understand that other provinces can have legal and jurisdictional problems with it. However, I can tell you in all openness and honesty that New Brunswick does not really perceive any problems with this bill, in its current form. Without wanting to go out on a limb or sounding too pretentious, I would say that New Brunswick has already gone further than what this bill proposes.

Mr. Luc Harvey: New Brunswick was very dependent on electricity generated by coal-powered plants.

Are there plans to reduce that dependency?

Hon. Roland Haché: Obviously, no Canadian province would take pride in wanting to continue producing greenhouse gases through the use of such power plants. All provinces would agree to reduce such emissions. In New Brunswick, we are currently renovating Pointe Lepreau, which you have probably heard of. We are also considering the possibility of building a second Pointe Lepreau and channelling natural gas to northern New Brunswick, where the Belledune and Dalhousie power plants are coal-fired. We are looking to convert them to natural gas, which would reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Yes, New Brunswick is making real efforts. This is not something that can be done by snapping our fingers, but through hard and ongoing work. That is what we are doing.

• (1610)

Mr. Luc Harvey: As for the eventual use of natural gas, how many years would you need to adjust?

Hon. Roland Haché: I cannot give you a specific answer because, in the case of the two power plants located in northern New Brunswick, an implementation plan will have to be drawn up in order to carry the natural gas to the region. That is part of our plan for change, our election platform. Unfortunately, I cannot tell you how long that will take.

Mr. Luc Harvey: I am not asking you for a very specific answer, give or take a month or a year. Rather, I would like to know whether it can be done in five, ten or twenty years, whether it is a short, medium or long-term project.

Hon. Roland Haché: You said five, ten or twenty years, and I could answer like facetiously that it could indeed take five, ten or twenty years. In fact, we have to conduct a feasibility study of the project to carry natural gas to northern New Brunswick. I think that might take five years. I think that it will take between five and ten years before we have a definitive decision, that is if the feasibility study is conclusive, and if natural gas can be used in our power plants. They are located in my region; it is therefore in my best interest to conduct such a study.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister Haché. In respect of your time, thank you very much for joining us. We appreciate and understand, certainly, that you need to leave us, so thank you very much for appearing.

Hon. Roland Haché: I want to thank you again, Mr. Chair, for the invitation.

I thank the members of the committee for their very interesting questions.

I hope this will help you with the bill that is in front of you now, and I wish each and every one of you very well.

The Chair: Good. Thank you very much.

I'd like to move on now to welcome our popular ambassador from Sweden. Lots of us have gotten to know you and enjoy your company.

I'd like you to introduce your colleague on video conference, and we'll ask for a statement. Then we'll go back to Mr. Martin and carry on with questions.

Her Excellency Ingrid Maria Iremark (Ambassador of Sweden to Canada, Embassy of Sweden): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am of course delighted and honoured to be here today, even if the road has been a little bumpy. I would like to extend my thanks to the committee for inviting me and my colleague from Stockholm, who is joining us via video link.

Sustainable development is a key priority for the Swedish government, and we are very happy to have this opportunity to speak about our experiences today. I know you're eager to get into the substance of the matter, but before giving the floor to my colleague, allow me to make the following point.

As representatives of a foreign government, it's not for me or my colleague to comment on the merits of the private member's bill that is in front of the committee today. What we will do is share our own experiences in this field.

Turning to the video screen, I would like to introduce Katja Awati. Ms. Awati is a deputy director in the environmental quality division at the Ministry of Environment. She has, I know, a thorough knowledge of our policies in this field, and in particular of the work on setting environmental targets and evaluating them. Perhaps I should mention that Ms. Awati was in Canada in the fall of 2006, when she participated in a Canadian-Swedish leadership program at the Canada School of Public Service.

It's about a quarter past ten at night in Sweden, and I think Ms. Awati is alone at the Ministry of Environment. I even think she is on parental leave and has come in just for this thing.

•(1615)

The Chair: We appreciate your sacrifice, Ms. Awati. Thank you so much, on behalf of the committee.

[Translation]

Ms. Ingrid Maria Iremark: Mr. Chair, allow me now to give the floor to my colleague Ms. Katja Awati.

[English]

Ms. Katja Awati (Deputy Director, Division for Environmental Quality, Ministry of Environment of Sweden): Thank you for the introduction and for the opportunity to brief you on the Swedish experiences of target-setting in the area of sustainable development.

The Swedish Parliament has adopted 16 environmental quality objectives with the overall goal to hand over a society to the next generation in which the major environmental problems have been solved. The 16 environmental quality objectives represent the environmental dimension of sustainable development. When the environmental quality objectives were adopted in 1999, they replaced all previously adopted environmental targets within the area of environmental policy, and at the same time a whole new system for follow-up and defined responsibility was established. I believe this was a major change from the system we had before.

For each of the environmental quality objectives, we have one central government authority appointed as responsible. The responsibility includes proposing and implementing measures, monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on progress. On a regional level, the county administrative boards are responsible for defining and monitoring regional objectives that correspond to the national ones. They're also responsible for supporting the municipalities in their work to adapt local objectives.

To coordinate all the activities within the system, the government has established an environmental objectives council with representatives from the central government agencies, the county administrative boards, the municipalities, the business sector, and the NGOs. Every year the council reports back to the government on the progress toward attaining the objectives, and every fourth year it presents an in-depth evaluation, which may include proposals and adjustments to the interim targets and also to the system.

The system with 16 environmental quality objectives has been in place for seven years now and has become a self-evident part of the Swedish environmental policy. In April this year, a month ago, the council presented its second in-depth evaluation, and I will briefly go through the conclusions regarding the structure and the functioning of the system.

The process has led to stronger partnerships between agencies and also, to some extent, with the business sector and other stakeholders. Views of sustainability have developed, and environmental concerns have become better integrated into society. With regard to the follow-up progress, the division of roles among the agencies with lead responsibilities for the objectives has been developed and improved.

But of course there are many challenges for the future. I dare say this is, with the extent and the number of agencies involved, perhaps the largest collaborative undertaking we have in Sweden. For it to be effective, a high degree of coordination is required. Also, it is important to keep the momentum and the motivation in the system. Therefore strong political support is required, and there is also a continuous need for integrating environmental efforts into every sector of society. Sector responsibility is a key factor, as many environmental problems have to be addressed in the specific sector concerned.

Finally, the overall conclusion from the council is, though, that the efforts to attain the objectives have developed positively and enhanced the sum total of environmental action in Sweden.

I think I'll stop there and leave time for questions.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Martin, I understand you are prepared to answer questions as they relate to this. I believe everyone has a copy of your brief, so for the sake of time I'm going to ask that we go to questions right now and then we'll circulate. Certainly feel free to interject at any point on behalf of the department.

Let's begin with Mr. Regan.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I must say that members of the committee no doubt join me in feeling somewhat guilty, not only for keeping you up so late, but away from your children when you're on maternity leave. So thank you very much for joining us on a second occasion after the first one was averted, so to speak.

You talked about the role of the council. Is that the key way in which each department is held accountable for maintaining the sustainable development goals and following up on plans? How do you keep each department accountable to make sure they do what they're supposed to do?

Ms. Katja Awati: I must say it hasn't really been an issue. All the authorities and the departments have been very active in this process. With the change from the system we had before, with the very poor follow-up and very unclear responsibility, everyone needed a change, so it has been quite easy. We haven't had to force this in any way. Our actors have been very motivated to collaborate on this issue.

We need to go back to Parliament every fourth year with a bill from the government to present how we are going to attain the objectives, so that is the answer to your question, I guess. This is a requirement we need to fulfill.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Ms. Awati, could you tell us how in the departments you define the kinds of targets you're setting? Do you define them, for instance, in terms of the concentrations of pollutants and certain things? Do you define them in terms of process? How do you determine what those targets are?

Ms. Katja Awati: We have defined 16 environmental quality objectives. They are more like visions—for example, no climate change, clean air, natural acidification only. They're more like visions. But then we have interim targets to guide the more practical

everyday work, which state the kind of nature that we would like to change, any kinds of pollutants. They are adopted by Parliament, the interim targets as well as the more practical ones.

Hon. Geoff Regan: One last question, if I may. When you set the objectives and are working on developing the achievement of those objectives, do you set targets for individual regions of the country, or for the country as a whole?

Ms. Katja Awati: We set targets for the country as a whole, and then the different regions are responsible for adapting them to the regional level, to set regional targets that correspond to the national ones.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bigras.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank you for appearing, albeit at a distance.

I find that the model you've presented us with today is very interesting, even though we should keep in mind that it is very difficult to import a model and implement it as is. I believe you would admit as much.

I would first like to congratulate you on those 15 objectives adopted in 1999, and for the 16th on biodiversity, which was passed by Parliament in 2005. I would like to focus on those objectives because they are national targets that can be implemented domestically.

To follow up on a question by Mr. Regan, I would like to know whether you set mandatory targets for each region in Sweden. Is there an obligation to meet those targets, given the legislation that was passed by European parliamentarians in 1999?

If I am not mistaken, the European Union has also issued directives. What is the link between the Swedish sustainable development strategy law and the European Union directives? How do you reconcile the European Union directives and the legislation passed by the Swedish Parliament?

• (1625)

[English]

Ms. Katja Awati: I'll start with the question on the regional level. Our environmental quality objectives have no formal legal status. They are policy objectives, although they are adopted by a majority of the Parliament.

At the regional level, the county administrative boards are responsible for working with regional targets that are adjusted to the national ones. They fulfill the objectives, in a good way, but the objectives have no legal status.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: As for my second question, are there European Union directives, and how—

[English]

Ms. Katja Awati: Definitely. They are sometimes integrated into the environmental quality objective system such that they are interim targets, because the EU directives are usually very specific that pollution needs to be reduced, for example, and then they are integrated into the system as interim targets.

That is why this system needs to be, on one hand, very stable and predictable for the actors, the stakeholders, but it also needs to be flexible to be able to adjust to what happens outside Sweden, as Sweden is quite a small country and very much integrated into the EU.

Every fourth year we take into consideration what has happened in the EU and the directives, and then we need to make some adjustments to the system, to the interim targets—not to the vision, not to the overall targets, but to the interim targets.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I have no more questions, but I would like to congratulate you for implementing Action 21. Your example has been recognized by the OECD, among others. Your model is setting an example for us all.

Mr. Chair, is there any time left for my colleague Marcel Lussier?

[English]

The Chair: Yes. Go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Lussier (Brossard—La Prairie, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As part of your climate change strategy, how was Sweden able to reduce its dependency on oil? What kind of legislation did you adopt to limit oil consumption in Sweden?

[English]

Ms. Katja Awati: Well, this is not my area of expertise. We have a lot of biofuels, of course, bioenergy. Of course you also know that we have had a lot of nuclear power, since a couple of years ago.

To limit the carbon dioxide, we have used taxes, economic instruments. We have a price on carbon dioxide emissions.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Lussier: How will Sweden produce its ethanol?

• (1630)

[English]

Ms. Katja Awati: We have ethanol production in I think two industries in Sweden. I think we also import a lot.

I must say this is not my area of expertise, so I'm sorry if I can't answer. I can definitely get back to you with more specific figures on how we're doing it and in what amounts.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Lussier: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Thank you, Madam Ambassador and Ms. Awati, for being with us.

Maybe I'll pick up where my colleague left off, regarding the question of pricing carbon or pricing carbon dioxide, greenhouse gases. I'm not sure if this is also an area that is not in your expertise. Maybe I should clarify that first before I get into details.

Ms. Katja Awati: I can try, and if not I can get back to you.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: There is some debate going on in this country right now as to how to go about pricing carbon. Some suggest a straight carbon tax that would be applied on all fuels, fuel sources that produce greenhouse gases. Others have suggested a cap-and-trade system.

Can you just very briefly explain the current state of affairs in Sweden with respect to carbon taxation, or the valuing of carbon, placing a price on carbon?

Ms. Katja Awati: We have very good experiences from carbon taxes. I think that's what we evaluate as the most important instrument used to reduce our emissions of carbon dioxide. Of course we also discuss the cap-and-trade that's used in the EU emissions system, but at the moment we are working to raise the carbon tax, we are not discussing to exempt or reduce it. We find it a very useful instrument.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: What do you do with the revenues that come from the carbon tax?

Ms. Katja Awati: They go into the state budget.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Just into general revenues or—

Ms. Katja Awati: They're not earmarked. Yes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: They're not earmarked at all. That's interesting.

What does Sweden do with the argument that regardless of what attempts you make to reduce greenhouse gases, they will be nullified by the Indias and Chinas of the world, that the growing economies in the developing world will wipe out any effort, and therefore any sacrifice on behalf of Swedes is not useful?

Ms. Katja Awati: For one, we see that we need to be a good example. We need to show it's possible to decouple emissions from environmental growth. It's possible to still have environmental growth and reduce emissions, and we've proved it is possible.

And then we also believe we need to change into another type of economy, that we can gain from it with environmental technology. This is also a welcome change for us. We need to put pressure on the industry to make this change, to adjust to the new world, where the environmental technology may be a very good market to sell and to export.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I can recall the previous Minister of the Environment being before this committee and being pressed quite often about the rising greenhouse gases in Canada. At one point the answer was that the economy grew. That coupling of the environment, particularly a coupling of pollution and a growth in economy, is one that seems to exist in some places still as old-world thinking.

From my reflection on your presentation and also seeing Sweden on the world stage and your performance, you're in an enviable place, from the view of a Canadian citizen, in the sense that you have mirrored your politics and policy into a positive result, that you are attempting to achieve greenhouse gas reductions while growing the economy and making some attempts to become carbon neutral as a nation some time in the future.

The question was put earlier by my colleague about the way this was crafted through. We've heard from the Canadian government time and again that there's a silo effect, that the Department of Finance might not be listening to the Department of Transport and Transport not listening to Environment, and in general the environment department losing out and the environment minister being unable to make the changes required.

Can you point to one or two specific things you've done to overcome the silo effect?

• (1635)

Ms. Katja Awati: We have that here as well. I know your system is different, but we have organized the government authorities in a way that helps the communication between ministries. I also believe we have focused very much on sector integration, and that, I believe, is a key. If the system is so transparent that they can define themselves, then the other departments also have to see and be there and be able to respond to their sectors.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: What consequences arise from not hitting these departmental or regional targets you've spoken of, whether it's the pollution rate, greenhouse gases, or what not? In Canada there seems to be little or no consequence, that we've been able to find, for repeated failures, as reported by the auditor of this country. Do you implement any? How is it that you encourage people to achieve the promises made?

Ms. Katja Awati: These are politically formulated objectives. It is mainly for the politicians to actually show that this is for real. Then, when it comes to the county administrative boards, they get some extra resources, of course, to work within this system. That also goes for the central government agencies.

At the end of the day, I think, mostly it's the political agenda that needs to be very much focused on these issues. We need to have a lot of political support to be able to keep focused.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you, Chair.

To the witnesses—Ambassador, Ms. Awati, Mr. Martin—thank you for being here today.

Before I start my questioning, Chair, we cut off Mr. Martin about halfway through his presentation. I'm wondering if we could at this time hear the rest of his presentation. After that, I would like to begin the questioning, if that's okay with you.

The Chair: Sure.

I apologize, Mr. Martin. Obviously we had a miscommunication with our previous minister. If you'd like to just complete your presentation, go ahead. Then I will start the timing for Mr. Warawa.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michael Martin: Thank you.

I was explaining the current situation with respect to the sustainable development strategies.

In December of 2006, on tabling the fourth round of sustainable development strategies, the Minister of the Environment specifically noted the commissioner's observation in 2005 that the failure to develop a federal sustainable development strategy “will leave Canadians and parliamentarians without a clear idea of the government's overall plan for sustainable development, how it will get there, and what progress it has made.” The minister noted that the government agreed with the commissioner that more needs to be done to improve sustainable development reporting, and indicated that a range of options would be examined, including legislation, with a view to making further progress towards putting sustainability at the heart of the government's activities.

Environment Canada began a review at that time, with a view to developing options for improvements for the fifth round of strategies beginning in 2009. Subsequently, the commissioner also undertook a 10-year retrospective evaluation of the existing approach and recommended that the government undertake a thorough review by October 2008, a recommendation which the government accepted.

I should tell the committee that Environment Canada has worked collaboratively with the commissioner and his staff throughout this process. The review that is currently underway has several areas of focus, including examining options for a strengthened framework or overall strategy with clear goals and indicators. I am confident that this work will be completed by the October deadline set by the commissioner.

• (1640)

[*English*]

Turning now to Bill C-474, I would like to note two issues that relate to the possible or the potential implementation of the bill as currently drafted—and this is based on my own examination of the bill.

First, the bill would require the development of a national, as opposed to a federal, sustainable development strategy. As the committee is aware, responsibility for the environment is not defined in the Constitution Act. Over time, a variety of mechanisms have been developed to facilitate federal-provincial cooperation in improving environmental quality in Canada, including a wide range of work done under the authority of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment.

As a practical matter, if we expect the provinces to be full and willing partners in the implementation of a national sustainable development strategy, it would, in my view, be important to engage them in its development, including the definition of its goals and its targets and in a discussion of which level of government would be held accountable for their achievement.

That brings me to my second point—namely, the goals and targets that are currently proposed in the draft bill. I think the commissioner has been very clear that defining measurable goals and developing performance indicators to track progress towards those goals is essential to any effective sustainable development strategy. Indeed, these are characteristics of effective, accountable public management.

As currently drafted, clause 8, for example, requires the establishment, within two years of the act coming into force, of short-, medium-, and long-term targets and an implementation strategy for meeting each item listed in column 2 of the bill's schedule.

Clause 10 subsequently requires the minister, following the tabling of the strategy in the House, to make regulations prescribing targets and caps for each item. I assume these regulations would be based on regulatory authorities in other existing statutes, as the bill does not provide any new regulatory authorities.

As I understand it, these two provisions together would therefore require the government, potentially, to prepare regulations for all 60 of the items listed in the schedule, including all 323 of the discrete substances covered by the national pollutant release inventory, and to do so within 30 days of the tabling of the national sustainable development strategy.

Regulation can be a very important instrument in improving environmental outcomes. However, if regulation is to be successfully implemented, it requires good science, close cost-benefit analysis, and careful consultation with those who would potentially be subject to or impacted by any new obligations.

Experience suggests that there would be major challenges in developing such a large number of regulations in such a short timeframe. Furthermore, regulations may not be the most appropriate instrument for addressing each of the many items listed in the schedule.

I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Martin.

Now we'll go to Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you so much, Chair.

I'm just realizing the time back in Sweden must be quite late, so in the interest of permitting you to go home, I have one quick question.

What is the price of gasoline? Is it per litre or per gallon, and what is that price?

Ms. Katja Awati: It's 13 Swedish kronor per litre. Is that \$5 per litre?

Ms. Ingrid Maria Iremark: It just went up today. It's \$2.30 Canadian per litre.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you so much. I wish you well as you go home and have a good sleep.

I have questions for Mr. Martin.

The Chair: I would like to thank you, as well, for staying so late and for your input. I'm sure the committee appreciates it.

Certainly we understand. I believe all the members have asked the questions they would like. And I hope the ambassador will stay. We can ask her any further ones.

Thank you so much, and get home to the baby.

• (1645)

Ms. Katja Awati: Thank you very much.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Martin, I have questions for you. Thank you for your presentation. I found it very interesting.

I believe you broke your presentation into three themes—first of all, that the government has agreed with the last report from the commissioner on sustainable development and that we are doing a review department by department. You said that the review is currently under way. It has several areas of focus, including examining options for a strengthened framework or overall strategy with clear goals and indicators. You're confident that this work will be completed by the October deadline set by the commissioner. So governments agreed with that, and that's ongoing.

At the same time, we have Bill C-474, which is a bill on sustainable development. Are you suggesting that Bill C-474 may be duplicating some of the work that's already being done, or is it not addressing what needs to be addressed?

Mr. Michael Martin: Mr. Chairman, I was simply seeking to clarify for the committee what the government is doing currently as it relates to the renewal of sustainable development strategies. I wasn't commenting specifically, in that section, on Bill C-474.

With respect to Bill C-474, I just noted two questions that I would have if it fell to my department to implement the bill as a practical matter.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Okay, thank you.

I want to address the issue you brought up about “national” as opposed to “federal”. I think you brought up a very interesting point. You said that as a practical matter, if we expect it to be a “national” sustainable development strategy, we should be consulting the provinces.

I'll next be asking about the list on the schedule, and there are a number of issues or substances that deal with provincial jurisdiction, as brought to our attention by Mr. Bigras.

But there hasn't been any consultation in this process. If this is a “national” plan, there was no consultation with the environment ministers. I think the commissioner's report and what we're doing in the study or review deal with the federal departments and therefore could be a “federal” sustainable strategy as opposed to a “national” one.

Could you elaborate a little bit on that? I think it's a very interesting point. Maybe we should not be calling it a "national" but should be calling it a "federal" strategy.

Mr. Michael Martin: Being precise in the terms will be important in relation to the instruments that are then required, under the bill, to be used. As you've suggested, the fact that the bill requires the minister to make regulation in a very wide range of areas that are listed in column 2 of the schedule would raise the question about how successfully we would be able to develop and implement that regulation, both in terms of its scope and also in terms of the specific items.

I imagine that would depend on the specific items, because the list is quite long, and there's quite a range of specific items laid out in it.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I used my highlighter to a great extent as I listened to your speech. You went on to say that the commissioner has been very clear, that defining measurable goals and developing performance indicators are essential to any effective sustainable development strategy. These things have not been done on Bill C-474.

We asked that: has there been an analysis done on this bill? We were told no. Mr. Sadik said no, there had not been an analysis done. So Bill C-474 is not involving the provinces to this point, and no analysis has been done.

That paragraph is indicating that there is a big problem with not defining measurable goals and having no performance indicators built into this bill. Is that the point you're making?

• (1650)

Mr. Michael Martin: I'm simply reading the text of the bill. As I understand it, the goals would be established: there would be a schedule, and then it would fall to the minister within two years to return to the House and table a national sustainable development strategy, with targets in each area, and then within 30 days of that make regulations.

The question of how effectively this could be done is simply a question that comes to my mind in reading the bill.

Mr. Mark Warawa: How much time do I have, sir?

The Chair: You have three minutes.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Good, let's go to the schedule.

I'm looking at the schedule, and I actually compared it with the schedule listed in *Toward a National Sustainable Development Strategy for Canada*, presented by the David Suzuki Foundation. It's a very interesting document, but word for word, it's exactly the same schedule.

So there are short-, medium-, and long-term requirements in this. And as you pointed out, within a very short period of time there would have to be a cost-benefit analysis done of this. We're talking of over 400 substances, when you include the national pollutant release inventory. It's a huge amount of work, with a broad range of issues, from livestock density to turbidity and automobile dependence. As was pointed out recently by my colleague, municipal waste is there, as are nuclear waste, neurotoxins, and carbon monoxide emissions. So it's very broad. And when you include the pollutant release inventory, it's over 400 substances. But there was

no analysis done, no rationale for why it's this particular list or requirement, or why these are the issues that should be on this list. From previous witnesses, we've heard that it would be much more practical to have a small list, instead of this broad, all-encompassing list.

Does the department have the resources to meet what the bill is requiring? And is it realistic to come up with regulations in that short period of time without consultation with the provinces? It seems like an impossible and unrealistic task to do what's being asked for in Bill C-474.

Mr. Michael Martin: I don't wish to speculate on the intent of the drafters of the bill. I'm merely saying that if indeed it were the case that the bill would require the use of the regulatory tool for each target, and if indeed it were to be as extensive as currently suggested, yes, I think that would be extremely difficult to achieve, based on our experience in making regulations in accordance with the existing statutory framework.

Mr. Mark Warawa: What would be the logistical and financial implications of trying to meet these many substances in a short period of time?

Mr. Michael Martin: We obviously have not done that analysis, but it would be very significant. The committee may wish to examine the experience with the development of a single environmental regulation. It normally takes some years, depending on its complexity and on the requirement for consultation, not only with the provinces, but also, of course, with industry and other stakeholders.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Chair, I think what we're seeing is a rush to complete Bill C-474, and the reality is that much more thought needs to go into it and a lot more consultation, particularly with the provinces.

Thank you.

• (1655)

The Chair: We'll go to the second round. I have Mr. Regan, Mr. Vellacott, and Mr. Bigras.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Just to be clear, Mr. Chair, how long was the time in the first round? You started off saying three minutes in total for each of us, and then you had three additional minutes; so I must have had ten or something like. I don't think we had ten minutes originally.

I'm not clear how this works right now.

The Chair: No, you actually went short in your first round.

Hon. Geoff Regan: But you talked about three minutes each, so I wanted to be short.

The Chair: Well, I tried to do that for the minister, because he had to leave in 30 minutes—and of course we kept him a bit longer. Then we went back to the first round and basically allowed ten minutes per person. That's why I asked Mr. Silva if he had any additional questions. So it was basically for three minutes and ten minutes.

I apologize. It hasn't necessarily been that smooth with the minister leaving.

Hon. Geoff Regan: How long is this round?

The Chair: This round should be for five minutes each. I'll certainly make sure you have enough time.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Okay, thank you very much. I don't know what's up.

Let me ask you, Mr. Martin, first of all, if you consider the provinces to be one of the department's stakeholders—that is, the provincial governments.

Mr. Michael Martin: Most certainly.

Hon. Geoff Regan: The bill says in subclause 8(3):

(3) The Minister shall submit a draft of the National Sustainable Development Strategy to the Sustainable Development Advisory Council, the Commissioner, the relevant Parliamentary committees, the relevant stakeholders and the public for review and comment...

Then it talks about the consultation period of a first draft, rather than the final document. That surely would include the provinces, would it not?

Mr. Michael Martin: I would think it would need to.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you.

In your view, does developing measurable goals and performance indicators have anything to do with costing?

Mr. Michael Martin: It should. We should have, in developing any goal, some sense of the costs and we should be thinking of doing some analysis to support that if we expect to achieve a measurable outcome.

Hon. Geoff Regan: In determining the measurable goals and performance indicators you're choosing for a strategy, you would develop that kind of costing. Is that correct?

Mr. Michael Martin: I think we would need to do that kind of analysis, yes.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Okay.

The commissioner asked for measurable targets and performance indicators. Don't you think the bill does that?

Mr. Michael Martin: I think the bill is actually very prescriptive, yes.

Hon. Geoff Regan: I talked about subclause 8(3). Not only among the stakeholders but also on the Sustainable Development Advisory Council there are representatives of the provinces, are there not?

Mr. Michael Martin: As I read the bill, that's my understanding. The suggestion is that there could be provincial involvement, yes.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you. Those are my questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Regan.

Mr. Vellacott.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciated your written presentation, Mr. Martin.

I want to follow up on a few things. You infer that provincial consultations would be pretty necessary. You say:

As a practical matter, if we expect the provinces to be full and willing partners in the implementation of a national sustainable development strategy, it would be important to engage them in its development, including the definition of its goals

and targets, and in a discussion of which level of government would be held accountable for their achievement.

There have been questions that have touched on that a bit already, but how long are you talking about for the kind of consultation you're inferring here? You have "extensive meetings required over a period of time". What length of process are you looking at there?

Mr. Michael Martin: As I mentioned, we do have machinery in place to facilitate consultation with the provinces at a number of levels, most importantly the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. We have a work program in that organization that is technical, particularly, but does extend to some very important issues. For example, we are currently working with the provinces through CCME on the development of a strategy on municipal waste water in Canada. That is both a policy process that has required ministerial involvement, and it's also a technical process in its development and design. And it has an economic dimension in terms of the assessment of the costs of implementing such a strategy.

It has taken some time. We have been working on it for some years. So I think the challenge is simply, in any particular area, the amount of time we would be allotted for consultation. If the bill were to provide a specific time we had to develop a strategy, I'm sure we would meet the requirements of the bill. But it may constrain our ability to consult to the extent that may satisfy everyone involved. I guess I could say that.

● (1700)

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Since you're inferring here that a pretty extensive and full consultation back and forth requires to have the proper implementation, I guess the rub is if you constrain it too much, or you have it too circumscribed, you don't have willing partners in terms of the implementation.

Mr. Michael Martin: Right. And it would also depend on the areas of engagement. Because we collaborate with the provinces in defining the appropriate roles for provincial action and for federal action in any area at any point in time, it is quite important to try to have some understanding of the goals we're seeking to achieve in the areas where such intervention, particularly federal intervention, would add value and would help to improve environmental outcomes.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: You talked about the schedule of items and some of the areas to be regulated being affected by Bill C-474—at the end of the bill, the ten goals, roughly hundreds of affected areas. It's fairly broad. It seems to me that could be quite a costly thing. I'm not the one to do the actual calculation at this point, but when you have those ten fairly broad overarching goals, hundreds of affected areas....

I guess the question would be, in your humble and neutral, non-partisan opinion, is there a fair bit of expense? Is it a rather costly exercise with all the schedules that we have, the goals, and the affected areas? Is the bill maybe attempting to take on too much? Is it rather too broad in terms of the ambition of the bill itself?

Mr. Michael Martin: It's not for me to say whether the bill is too ambitious or too broad. I'm simply looking at the schedule, which is a long list, and then what I understand to be the requirements of the bill in relation to the schedule. If the requirement is for us to make regulations in each of these areas, then it is a very extensive undertaking, absolutely.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Did you say extensive or expensive?

Mr. Michael Martin: I said extensive.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Would you agree that it's also very expensive?

Mr. Michael Martin: It would certainly have a cost, and I imagine it would be significant, yes.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vellacott.

We'll now go to Mr. Bigras and Mr. Lussier.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would not want to add to the questions asked by the members of the government, but I would like to come back to subclause 8(3) of the bill. I would like to understand how you interpret it. The subclause reads as follows:

(3) The Minister shall submit a draft of the National Sustainable Development Strategy to the Sustainable Development Advisory Council [...]"

In your view, do the provinces have 120 days to submit their comments and conduct a review? Is that your interpretation of clause 8? I presume, as my colleague Mr. Regan said, that the provinces are the relevant stakeholders. Therefore, would the provinces be put on the same footing as the Sustainable Development Advisory Council? Is that how I should interpret this?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Martin: In fairness, Mr. Chairman, the bill, as I read it—and I don't pretend to have mastered all its clauses—is not specific in how it would engage the provinces if indeed the assumption is that subclause 8(3) implies that the provinces would be engaged at that stage only. Then, as I read it, it would suggest that they would be subject to that period of comment, which would not be less than 120 days.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: That answers my first question on federal-provincial matters, because I think I have heard enough so far.

I would like to come back to the federal sustainable development strategy. I noted that Agriculture and Agri-food Canada has a 2007-2009 sustainable development strategy. If I may, I would like to quote one sentence from the summary:

In the context of Canadian agriculture and agri-food production, sustainable development means producing, processing, and distributing agricultural products...

Do you think that strategic sustainable environmental assessments are part of a federal sustainable development strategy?

Furthermore, are you familiar with Bill C-33, which is intended to ensure that ethanol will make up 5% of all gasoline sold by 2020? Has Bill C-33 been the subject of a strategic environmental assessment? As the person responsible for sustainable development at the environment department, can you tell me whether a strategic environmental assessment was conducted and, if so, can you submit that strategic assessment to the environment committee?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Martin: The directive on strategic environmental assessment is administered by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and by the Privy Council Office. Since 1990, as you know, major government initiatives, proposals, are subject to a strategic environmental assessment. And Bill C-33—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Bill C-33, yes.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Martin: —yes, would have been subject to a strategic environmental assessment, but I would have to defer to the Privy Council Office as to the specific status of that bill, of that assessment, and whether it could be tabled or not. I simply don't know the answer to that question, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Chair, if that strategic environmental assessment is contained in Bill C-33, I would like the committee to be informed and the assessment to be tabled here, at the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

[*English*]

The Chair: I certainly will ask that question, Mr. Bigras, and the clerk will get an answer for us.

Mr. Lussier.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Lussier: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Martin, the Minister of the Environment of New Brunswick tabled two documents here earlier. Have you seen the document entitled "Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment"?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Martin: No, I'm sorry, I have not received a copy of that document.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Lussier: Well, then, I would like to read you an excerpt: "For the past year the major work of the council has been related to the federal regulatory framework for industrial air emissions."

Did you take part in those discussions with the provincial ministers?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Martin: I have participated in some of those discussions, yes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Lussier: Now, there are two major files that are raised in those discussions between the federal government and the provinces. There is the matter of clean air and the four pollutants that will be regulated, and then the issue of wastewater that will be dealt with shortly.

How can you explain that, in your presentation, you said that the task of regulating the 323 discrete substances covered by the National Pollutant Release Inventory and the 60 elements found in the appendix is an insurmountable one? How are we to interpret that when an official from the department in Sweden told us that her country has done so in little time? Are you in the process of reinventing the wheel with respect to those 400 products? Has not Sweden not already established standards? Is it normal to be in such a situation, where Canada has to reinvent the wheel to set objectives for those elements? Sweden has already had functional objectives in place for a number of years.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Martin: I have to confess I'm not an expert on the Swedish situation.

I certainly did not use the word “insurmountable”. I simply said that if the bill required us to launch a regulatory exercise to make regulations in each of these areas, there are 323 items in the National Pollutant Release Inventory, and therefore to make regulations affecting each of those would be a very extensive exercise.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Lussier: You also spoke about a national strategy versus a federal strategy. You say that it will not be easy to draw up a national strategy, because you will again have to consult with the provinces and all relevant stakeholders to set those objectives and targets. With regard to your national strategy, did you ever address that around the table with the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment? Have these always been federal objectives? Did anyone ever say that we needed a national strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Martin: I'm not sure if the term “national” is actually defined in the bill. The bill is intended to be binding on the federal government, as I understand it. I wouldn't want to try to interpret what the term “national” implies here.

My point was not the use of the term “national”, but rather that the bill as I understand it—and my understanding may not be complete, of course—would suggest there would be goals and has this very prescriptive list at the end where the federal government would use its federal regulatory powers in each of these areas. That naturally would have implications for the provinces, some of whom may have regulation in these areas already. It would depend on the subject. I'm simply saying it would have an impact and potentially some significant implications for them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Lussier: The Swedish representative told us that there was a central authority responsible for managing the objectives established in Sweden, and that the central authority delegated powers to regional and municipal authorities. The central authority in

Sweden also reported to the European Union. They have reached an agreement. How many countries have come to such agreements? Some fifteen countries have reached agreements in very little time, in under two years, regarding common objectives or the sharing of objectives in Europe. How can you explain that in Canada, ten provinces and three territories cannot agree on which objectives to set?

According to your document, we can expect unending negotiations and discussions. Why can we not take action?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Martin: I think we can examine the experience in the area of the environment in terms of federal-provincial cooperation. I think there have been many successes in terms of that cooperation and collaboration. It is a collaborative effort, however, and it simply takes time.

I was simply posing the question again related to how these national goals would connect to measures that would then be backed up with federal regulation, and working through what the implications of that would be. With provincial consent and collaboration, that could well be a viable option, but that would, I guess, depend on the particular problem and the spirit of collaboration that existed in discussing the item in question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Lussier: You said that you were considering the model. Are you considering the Swedish model or Canadian model?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Martin: I have read a bit about the experience in Sweden. It's my understanding that Sweden is a unitary state, but again I'm not an expert on that.

In terms of the question of subsidiarity within the EU, again I'm afraid I'm not an expert in that area.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Lussier: Than you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm not aware of any other questions, so I'd like to thank our guests for being here.

Thank you for keeping your colleague up so late, Ms. Ambassador.

Ms. Ingrid Maria Iremark: She has probably gone home now.

The Chair: Yes, I would think so.

Thank you very much, Mr. Martin, for appearing as well.

The meeting is adjourned.

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